

Dutch Diplomacy and Trade in *Rariteyten*

Episodes in the History of Material Culture of the Dutch Republic

Claudia Swan

The Dutch Republic, recognized as a sovereign nation in 1648, was built on a foundation of trade, and throughout the seventeenth century its mercantile and political interests were deeply enmeshed. Most historical accounts of the tiny republic on the North Sea emphasize Dutch interest in trade, and trade in spices in particular, as the motivation for establishing the Dutch East India Company, the Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC).¹ The VOC was officially established in 1602 with the support of the States General of the United Provinces of the Netherlands, the governing body of the nascent republic, and the Stadholder Prince Maurits; around the time that the company became profitable several decades later, the republic was recognized as a sovereign nation. The fates of these two institutions, mercantile and political, were codependent. Indeed, trade in the early years of the struggle for independence from Spain, from whose dominion the seven United Provinces of the Netherlands broke free during the Eighty Years' War, was almost entirely focused on competition with the Spanish and Portuguese Crowns – first in the East Indies and later, with the establishment of the West-Indische Compagnie (WIC), in the West Indies.

In the early years of the VOC, commerce was as likely to require diplomacy as to give rise to acts of war. The majority of diplomatic efforts

¹ Jonathan I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1477–1806* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); Maarten R. Prak, *The Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century: The Golden Age*, trans. Diane Webb (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Femme S. Gaastra, *The Dutch East India Company: Expansion and Decline*, trans. Peter Daniels (Zutphen: Walburg Press, 2003).

made by and on behalf of the United Provinces and its Stadholders in the early decades of the seventeenth century were intended to secure trade rights and privileges with nations and states and empires affiliated, for commercial purposes at least, with Portugal and Spain. The various Sultanates of the Strait of Malacca, which included Malacca, Johor and Aceh; the Sinhalese Kingdom; the Siamese Kingdom; the Moroccan kingdom; the Ottoman Empire: these and other foreign powers were all courted by the Dutch for the purposes of securing trading rights. In some cases, securing access to trade hubs and/or trade goods themselves involved military aggression against the Portuguese. The Dutch captured numerous Portuguese trade vessels in the years prior to and following the establishment of the VOC, seizing valuable goods sufficient to fund the efforts of the trading company – albeit by way of loot rather than anything approximating fair trade.²

Diplomacy was another means of securing a foothold in the competition with the Portuguese for trade in the East Indies, and with the French, English and Venetians in the Ottoman territories. Emissaries and missions traveled from and to the East Indies and from and to the Levant in the early decades of the Dutch Republic bearing missives and gifts – in the interest of trade. The emergence of the Dutch state as a global trading power resulted from military strategies and, simultaneously, by way of diplomatic and mercantile exchanges. Recent scholarship on early modern Dutch cultural exchange with and diplomacy in Asia by Adam Clulow, Mia Mochizuki, Cynthia Viallé and Kees Zandvliet demonstrates the complexities of diplomatic practices and political exchanges over the long term, to as late as the dissolution of the VOC at the close of the eighteenth century.³ Dutch negotiations with Eastern powers often involved *rarityeyten*, or rarities, mercantile access to which was one of the distinguishing qualities of the Republic in formation. In what follows, I take inspiration from these scholarly models and offer an account of the

² See, inter alia, Peter Borschberg, *Hugo Grotius, the Portuguese and Free Trade in the Indies* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2011).

³ See Adam Clulow's chapter in this volume; Mia Mochizuki, "Deciphering the Dutch in Deshima," in *Boundaries and Their Meanings in the History of the Netherlands*, ed. Benjamin J. Kaplan, Marybeth Carlson and Laura Cruz (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 63–94; Cynthia Viallé, "'To Capture Their Favour': On Gift-Giving by the VOC," in *Mediating Netherlandish Art and Material Culture in Asia*, ed. Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann and Michael North (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014), 291–319; Kees Zandvliet and Leonard Blussé, *The Dutch Encounter with Asia 1600–1950* (Amsterdam and Zwolle: Rijksmuseum and Waanders, 2002).

role of curious, rare, exotic objects (*rarityeyten*) in Dutch diplomatic relations across the map in the first decades of the seventeenth century, when the emergent nation was taking shape. Gifts and trade goods were, I suggest, interchangeable in early modern Dutch negotiations – negotiations that also pertained more broadly, outside the scope of Dutch encounters, in the early modern world. Broadly speaking, this chapter traces the role of material culture – the goods exchanged in the context of Dutch diplomacy – in the making of a new political entity.⁴ While geographically the focal point of my account is The Hague, and the scope is limited chronologically to the opening decades of the seventeenth century, this chapter follows the centripetal mobilization of *rarityeyten* by the Dutch for political ends into the middle of the seventeenth century and around the globe.

DUTCH-OTTOMAN DIPLOMACY

The early decades of the seventeenth century, the formative years of the Dutch Republic, were turbulent. The ongoing Netherlandish war of independence from the Spanish Crown reverberated across Europe and into North Africa and the Levant. Alliances negotiated in the first decades of the seventeenth century between, on the one hand, the northern European confederation of provinces that would be united as the Dutch Republic and, on the other, the immense and powerful Ottoman Empire may come as something of a surprise, but these affiliations came naturally given the mutual hatred of Spain.⁵ The motto of leaders of the Dutch Revolt (the so-called sea beggars), “*Liever Turks dan Paaps*” or “*Liever Turks dan Paus*”, declared it preferable to be Turkish (Muslim) than papal (Catholic). Insignia based on the motto, which the “sea beggars” wore, could be understood to reflect a positive conflation of interests: the crescent moon of Islam gains a face, a figuration inconceivable to Islam,

⁴ See Kees Zandvliet, *Maurits, Prins van Oranje* (Amsterdam and Zwolle: Rijksmuseum and Waanders, 2000), “Het Internationale Podium,” 336–81, for an important account of the role of material culture in the Dutch presence on the global stage to 1625. On early modern diplomacy and material culture, see most recently Nancy Um and Leah R. Clark, eds., *The Art of Embassy: Objects and Images of Early Modern Diplomacy*, special issue, *Journal of Early Modern History* 20, no. 1 (2016).

⁵ See Abdelkader Benali and Herman Obdeijn, *Marokko door Nederlandse Ogen 1605–2005* (Amsterdam and Antwerp: De Arbeidspers, 2005), “1595–1625: Een waardevol bondgenootschap,” 16–51; A. H. de Groot, *The Ottoman Empire and the Dutch Republic: A History of the Earliest Diplomatic Relations 1610–1630* (Leiden/Constantinople: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut, 1978).



FIGURE 6.1 Anonymous, crescent moon pendant (*Geuzenpenning*) worn under Admiral Louis de Boisot during the Siege of Leiden, silver, 1574, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, 3.5 cm × 3.1 cm × 2.7 cm. Amsterdam: Rijksprentenkabinet, Rijksmuseum.

with its proscription against representing animate things (Figure 6.1).⁶ The emblem signaled a deep compatibility between anti-Habsburg, anti-Spanish and anti-Catholic leaders of the United Provinces and the Islamic world, rendered in European terms.

Already in the final years of the sixteenth century, Dutch merchants sought access to North African Ottoman ports independent of English protection; and Ottoman envoys are recorded in the Netherlands as early as 1565 and again in the early 1580s.⁷ In the course of the Dutch Revolt the city of Sluis in the southernmost province of Zeeland was won from the Spanish in 1604, and 1400 Muslim “galley slaves” were freed from Spanish captivity; 135 of them were returned to Morocco in 1605.⁸ Freeing the captive Muslims increased the reputation of the lands of the Christian Prince Maurits among Muslim rulers and brought the United

⁶ See R. van Luttervelt, “Liever Turks dan Paaps,” *De Gids* 124 (October 1961): 150–63; K. F. Kerrebijn, “Zilveren halve manen,” *De Beeldenaar* 25 (2001): 173–75.

⁷ Willem Baudartius, *Emanuelis van Meteren Historie der Nederlandscher Gheschiedenissen* (Amsterdam: Jan. Evertsz. Cloppenburg, 1618), Book 31 introduces the 1612 treaty with the Ottoman court by reference to Murad III’s sympathies for William of Orange. See also de Groot, *The Ottoman Empire and the Dutch Republic*, 83–85.

⁸ Henry de Castries, *Les sources inédites de l’histoire du Maroc, Sér. 1 Dynastie saadienne* (The Hague and Paris: Martinus Nijhoff and Leroux, 1907), 65–67. See also Bülent Arı, “The First Dutch Ambassador in Constantinople: Cornelis Haga and the Dutch Capitulations of 1612,” PhD diss., University of Ankara, 2003, 80; de Groot, *The Ottoman Empire and the Dutch Republic*, 92.

Provinces into contact with the Moroccan Sultan Mulay Zidan/Zaidan el Nasir (d. 1627; r. 1603–1627). The young Ottoman Sultan Ahmed I (1590–1617; r. 1603–1617), whose control extended to the westernmost terrain of North Africa, was also appreciative of Christians who freed captive Muslims. In the same decade, the States General supplied the Moroccan ruler with warships – an act that registered with King Philip III of Spain as acute aggression; it was mentioned in his Edict of Expulsion of the Moriscos from Spain in 1609. By 1612, an alliance between the United Provinces and Moroccan and Ottoman rulers appeared to promise the mutually beneficial defeat of Spain. Religious and humanist scholarship in the Netherlandish provinces and in the Maghreb advanced a complementary critique of Catholicism, and offered the possibility of actual communication – where scholars such as Thomas Erpenius (1584–1624) hosted the Moroccan envoy Ahmad ibn Qasim Al-Hajarī (c. 1570–c. 1640) in Paris and again in Leiden, and missives to the States General in Arabic were promptly translated by the Leiden Arabist and Erpenius's mentor Joseph Justus Scaliger (1540–1609), for example.⁹ Respective positioning of Prince Maurits and the Moroccan sultan vis-à-vis their shared enemy Spain was very much at issue in the opening decades of the seventeenth century and, likewise, in the exchange of diplomatic gifts.

In 1609, Hammu ben Bashir, the Moroccan emissary of King Mulay Zidan, arrived in the Netherlands and, together with the Jewish merchant Samuel Pallache (1550–1616), negotiated on behalf of the Moroccan king the first alliance between the Christian United Provinces and an Islamic power.¹⁰ The agreement to pursue an alliance that “will be advantageous, useful, and profitable for [all] these lands” was sealed with gifts from the Moroccan king. A list provided by King Zidan itemizes “Two ‘*retal*’ of ambergris; four ‘*retal*’ of civet musk [or perfume]; four tapestries [‘*haithi*’]

⁹ On scholars of Hebrew and Arabic in the Netherlands, see Alastair Hamilton, *William Bedwell the Arabist, 1563–1632* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 1985), esp. ch. 2, “Holland and After,” 31–54; G. J. Toomer, *Eastern Wisdom and Learning: The Study of Arabic in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), “The Netherlands,” 41–52; G. A. Wiegiers, “The Andalusī Heritage in the Maghrib: The Polemical Work of Muhammad Alguazir (fl. 1610),” in *Poetry, Politics and Polemics: Cultural Transfer between the Iberian Peninsula and North Africa*, ed. Ed de Moor, Otto Zwartjes and G. J. H. van Gelder (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 1996), 107–32, esp. 107–10.

¹⁰ *Resolutiën der Staten Generaal van 1567 tot 1609*, vol. 14 (1607–9), ed. H. P. Rijperman (‘s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), 784–90. The full treaty is printed in Emanuel van Meteren, *Historie der Nederlandscher ende haerder na-buren oorlogen ende geschiedenissen* (‘s-Gravenhage: [widow and heirs of] Hillebrant Jacobszn. Wouw, 1614), 660r–661r.

of satin made in the sultan's palace; two tapestries of Persian silk; a bed covering."¹¹ The records of the States General reflect receipt from the Moroccan emissary of a locked chest containing gifts and "amber and civet [musk]," which were distributed among representatives to the States General.¹² Precious spices and *naturalia* such as ambergris and civet musk may have been intended to recommend Morocco as a source for the wares the VOC sought in the East Indies; as for the gift of precious fabrics, fine textiles were the lingua franca of early modern diplomacy.¹³ Indeed, these very wall hangings would soon be presented by the Dutch – to the English court, as we shall see.

Negotiations with Ottoman Sultan Ahmed I followed swiftly on the Moroccan exchange. In late October 1610, the States General received an entreaty from Constantinople to enter into a formal alliance with the "Turkish emperor" that would guarantee safe passage for citizens (merchants, in particular) of the United Provinces. The letter played on the insecurity of Mediterranean trade for the Dutch, who had not negotiated safe passage with the Ottoman sultan. If an ambassador were sent to Constantinople to secure alliances and trade capitulations, the letter assured its readers, the citizens of the United Provinces would "be privileged above other nations and able to conduct commerce more safely."¹⁴ The Admiral of the Ottoman Navy, Khalil Pasha (d. 1629, later grand vizier of the Ottoman Empire), was prepared, the letter further specified, to submit letters from the sultan to the States General to this effect as soon as Prince Maurits and the States General gave indication of their interest.¹⁵ The October letter was written not by the sultan or a member of his court, but by Jacob Gijsbrechtszn (Giacomo Gisbrechti), a jeweler from Antwerp who lived in Pera in Constantinople – an enterprising

¹¹ De Castries, *Les sources inédites de l'histoire du Maroc*, 175. De Castries notes that a "retal" is a pound of 19 ounces.

¹² On the Dutch record of the Moroccan gift and its local distribution, see *Resolutiën der Staten Generaal van 1567 tot 1609*, vol. 14 (1607–9), 786. The letter from King Mulay Zidan (dated 31 December 1612) is reprinted in de Castries, *Les sources inédites de l'histoire du Maroc*, 172–74.

¹³ See Carrie Anderson, "Material Mediators: Johan Maurits, Textiles, and the Art of Diplomatic Exchange," *Journal of Early Modern History* 20, no. 1 (2016): 63–85.

¹⁴ Klaas Heeringa and Jan Garbrand Nanninga, *Bronnen tot de geschiedenis van den Levantschen handel 1590–1826*, 4 vols. (Martinus Nijhoff: The Hague, 1910–66), vol. 1 (1590–1660), ed. K. Heeringa, 179–80 and 155–56 for general discussion. See also Van Meteren, *Historie der Nederlandscher*, 667v.

¹⁵ Khalil Pasha was three times grand admiral and twice grand vizier; see *Encyclopedia of Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1960–93), vol. 4 (1978), 970–72.

merchant who set his sights on mediating a most promising alliance.¹⁶ Gijsbrechtszn had access to Khalil Pasha, the sultan's falconer and arguably the most influential member at Sultan Ahmed I's court, and was also well informed regarding the state of Dutch trade.¹⁷

By 1610 Dutch merchants had traded in Ottoman ports for as long as a decade in the absence of any official relations between the United Provinces and the Ottoman Empire under the protection of the French and English, nations in possession of trade agreements. With the 1610 treaty with Barbary (North Africa) in place, it must have seemed an excellent moment to secure relations between The Hague and Constantinople as well. A chronicle written within a decade of these events prefaces its account of diplomatic relations with the Ottoman Empire with a clear reference to trade: "Given that the States General of the United Netherlands seek ardently to improve trade, commerce, and traffic by ship, and that they received in 1610 a letter from Constantinople . . ."¹⁸ The Ottoman court, for its part, was keen on an alliance with a renowned anti-Spanish power; the Dutch victory at Gibraltar, in combination with their success at keeping the Spanish Crown at bay in the East Indies, amplified their interest. Gijsbrechtszn's letter seems to have reflected local interests in Constantinople, and Khalil Pasha's ambitions to form an anti-papal league meshed well with Dutch commercial ambitions. In November 1610 the States General met to deliberate on a letter they received from Khalil Pasha, which followed on Gijsbrechtszn's. The result was the first diplomatic mission from the United Provinces to Constantinople. The States General was certainly interested in the freedom of Dutch captives, but also foresaw how profitable unrestricted access could be to trade through Constantinople and ports in Algiers, Syria, Tripoli and Alexandria, among other places. Speaking on behalf of the sultan, the Ottoman admiral wrote that "this mighty portal [the Porte Sublime] is open to all

¹⁶ In 2005 Antiquariaat van der Steur The Hague, listed for sale a 1605 passport issued to Gijsbrechtszn by Prince Maurits; he must by that time already have been resident in the Netherlands. His letters (in Dutch) to the State General are signed Giacomo Gisbrechti, presumably in accordance with diplomatic use of Italian.

¹⁷ The receipt of the letter and resulting deliberations are recounted in Van Meteren, *Historie der Nederlandscher*, fol. 667r. See de Groot, *The Ottoman Empire and the Dutch Republic*, 48–52, 99, 163, 167. See also Ingrid van der Vlis and Hans van der Sloot, *Cornelis Haga 1578–1654: Diplomat and Pioneer in Constantinople* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2012), 69–74, and M. van der Boogert and J. J. Roelants, *De Nederlands-Turkse betrekkingen. Portretten van een vierhonderdjarige geschiedenis* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2012).

¹⁸ Van Meteren, *Historie*, 667r.

friends such as you . . . who are in agreement with us, and their friends and ours; and to our enemies and those who are in agreement with them, such as the Spanish and the Duke of Tuscany, the Porte Sublime is inimical.” Once official letters had been exchanged, Khalil Pasha wrote, the sultan “wished to celebrate them, and they shall be celebrated with greater honor than you could imagine.”¹⁹

“RARITEYTEN VAN DESE LANDEN”

“Rare or unusual or curious objects from these lands” (*rariteyten van dese landen*): this phrase, borrowed from Dutch state documents, aptly describes the vast array of costly, elaborate, exceptional and locally produced objects and items presented by the first ambassador of the emerging Dutch Republic to the Ottoman Sultan Ahmed I in Constantinople.²⁰ The story of the 1612 Dutch gift – a story told more extensively elsewhere – concerns material culture in the context of Dutch trade, politics, science and visual culture in the seventeenth century.²¹ The 1612 Dutch gift was a bounty of goods: woven, painted, printed, lacquered and mounted things; worked and traced and carved and bound things; lavishly crafted and otherwise wondrous things, some of them natural, some of them edible, some scientific, all of them expensive. Many were locally produced – by artisans and printers in Amsterdam and Haarlem, by noblewomen in Gelderland and by painters and harness-makers in The Hague – and many were brought to the Netherlands from the East, obtained along the trade routes that by 1612 had for a decade already been effectively controlled by the Dutch by means of the VOC. By conversion into a present, these became diplomatic things. Ninety-three crates were carefully packed and their contents listed before being loaded

¹⁹ Heeringa, *Bronnen tot de geschiedenis van den Levantschen handel*, 1, 180–81; See de Groot, *The Ottoman Empire and the Dutch Republic*, 94–95.

²⁰ 13 August 1611, *Resolutiën der Staten-Generaal, Nieuwe reeks 1610–1670*, vol. 1, 1610–12, ed. A. Th. Van Deursen (‘s-Gravenhage: M. Nijhoff, 1971), 455.

²¹ Claudia Swan, “Birds of Paradise for the Sultan: Early Seventeenth-Century Dutch-Turkish Encounters and the Uses of Wonder,” *De Zeventiende Eeuw* 29 (2013): 49–63 with previous literature. The *locus classicus* is Nicolas de Roever, “Een Vorstelijk Geschenk. Een blik op de vaderlandsche nijverheid in den aanvang der zeventiende eeuw,” *Oud Holland* 1 (1883): 169–88. Over the course of time, more attention has been paid to the diplomatic relations that motivated the presentation than to the gift itself; and the specialization within the fields of (diplomatic) history, art history and history of the decorative arts has blunted the impact of de Roever’s study, which cuts across those fields.

on to a ship, the *Zwarte Beer*, which departed Enkhuizen in December 1612. Sixteen contained chairs; four contained porcelain; four more contained two salted oxen; and 3,138 pounds of Edam cheese were divided into 406 pieces and packed in seven packets.²² Thirteen chainmail vests filled one container; forty-two packets contained butter. Two globes were packed in one chest; a lantern made in Amsterdam and intended for the Blue Mosque, under construction at that time, filled another; and each of two additional containers held two further candelabra. Masses of fabrics, embroidered gloves, birds of paradise, turned ivory objects and a number of other items were packed in one large case; forty-seven pieces of lacquer were packed in a container that also held a box containing 200 tulip bulbs.²³ The state gift presented to Sultan Ahmed I is but one example, among many, of the uses of material culture by the Dutch in the world. In addition, it exemplifies the crucial role rarities played in trade and diplomacy alike.

In March 1612 Cornelis Haga arrived in Constantinople with a limited retinue and a complex brief from the States General. There, in the early years of the Dutch Truce with Spain, he rapidly secured the favor of trade capitulations for the Dutch – that is, permission from the Sultan to trade legally and without penalty in Ottoman territories. In addition, he initiated negotiations on behalf of Dutch prisoners in North Africa. Haga was granted an initial audience with the young Sultan Ahmet at Topkapı Palace on 1 May 1612, on the occasion of his arrival. This elaborate ceremonial occasion is described at length in a Dutch pamphlet printed the same year, which declares that “all Turks were very pleased by the friendship and alliance secured between the Sultan and our lands.” An alliance is declared, a friendship that in turn will unlock valuable trade routes, and one that guarantees freedoms that, as per the pamphlet, are “the best and most secure,” never before granted anyone else, and that “far exceed those enjoyed by the French, the English, and the Venetians.”²⁴ Hereby the Dutch were able to establish factors and consuls

²² On Italian gifts of hard cheese to the Ottoman Porte, see Antonia Gatward Cevizli's chapter in this volume.

²³ See Heeringa, *Bronnen tot de geschiedenis van den Levantschen handel*, 1, 273–74.

²⁴ *VVaerachtich verhael, belanghende de aenkomste tot Constantinoplen, van den ambassadeur der ... Staten Generael van de Vereenighde Nederlanden* (Alkmaar: Jacob Harmanszn Verblack, 1612), fol. 5r. The pamphlet also appeared in English, one year later, as *A True Declaration of the arrival of Cornelius Haga; (with others that accompanied him) Ambassadour for the generall States of the united Netherlands, at the great Citie of Constantinople* (London, 1613).

in the Levant and the Mediterranean, from Aleppo to Tunis. Haga presented gifts to the sultan during the initial audience, and, having secured trade concessions, he arranged to have another, massive presentation delivered to Constantinople. In spring 1613, the Dutch gift in the *Zwarte Beer* arrived. This shipload of objects comprised an expression of gratitude to a “friend” and ally, while the presentation of a lavish gift also complied with the expectations of the Ottoman court. An official record of the Dutch gift, “Inventory of the Goods and Presents Sent on Behalf of Their High Mightinesses [of the States General] to Constantinople, to Present to the Sultan and His Pashas, in the Year 1612,” is preserved in the National Archive in The Hague. This list describes the objects presented to Sultan Ahmed and his court as “goods and presents” and “goods and delights”; in other state documents they are referred to as “rarities of these lands.”²⁵

The Dutch gift to Sultan Ahmed I was strategically assembled and the items presented were purchased over the course of roughly six months in 1612. Following the States General’s acquiescence to requests from members of the imperial Ottoman court to engage in diplomatic relations, a Flemish jeweler resident in Constantinople, Lambert Verhaer, offered his expertise and service in purchasing appropriate items. In a letter to the States General dated September 1612, Verhaer recommended that the sultan be supplied with “*einige rarieteyten van desse landen*” (“some rarities of these lands”). Specifically, he proposes “that a great lantern be made for use in the new mosque which the Great Lord [the sultan] is now having built.” Verhaer also proposed that fine chairs, upholstered in velvet, would go over well at the court, as would some “of those tapestries that are made in Delft” along with “several large pieces of porcelain, also some quartz crystal vases, some fine linen cloths costing six to eight guilders per *ell*, some fine brass candelabras such as are used here in the churches and in grand homes, some harnesses, some turned ivory works, some beautiful shells, and other such things.” Verhaer’s letter concludes with the specification that “also in favor there are all beautiful colors of

²⁵ *Inventaris van de goederen ende presenten, die van wege H.H.M. zijn gesonden naer Constantipolen, om te presenteern aen den grooten heer ende de Bassas, Anno 1612.* Nationaal Archief 1.01.02, 12593.9 Secrete kas Turkije: “*Stukken betreffende de afrekeningen terzake van de geschenken vanwege de Staten-Generaal in 1612 naar Turkije gezonden.*” “Goods and delights” is my translation of “*goederen ende fraeyicheden.*” Also published in Heeringa, *Bronnen tot de geschiedenis van den Levantschen handel*, 1, 266–74.

velvet, and satin – damask or plain are both desired.”²⁶ When the *Zwarte Beer* – carrying Verhaer as well as the objects – set sail in December 1612, it carried all of the items he had recommended purchasing and then some. Verhaer was crucial in translating political need and will into material form, by negotiating the selection and the production of the gifts purchased in Amsterdam and in Haarlem in late 1612.²⁷

In an official instruction from the States General dated 8 December 1612, Haga was reminded of the value of his negotiations to date and of the nature of Dutch expectations for continued contact and commerce with the Ottomans. The trade capitulations were said to be of great import, as was the liberation of slaves and the establishment of consuls in the Levant. The States General acknowledged “the fine success of [Haga’s] legation” and “the fine work, diligence, and dexterity that he had shown, in the service of our country.” As for the gift under way at the time this letter was written, it is specified that the States General intended and desired that Haga “should share and distribute all of the gifts [itemized in the included inventory] in such a way as to honor our land and that we may receive thanks for them.”²⁸

What made *rarityeyten* appropriate or compelling gifts to present to foreign powers, especially of territories whence exotica came? The spectacular nature of many of the individual items and the extent of the gift, on which the States General spent roughly 25,000 guilders, attest to awareness of the splendor of Ottoman ritual and Ottoman gift exchange of the time. A crucial additional factor, in my view, is that the *rarityeyten* the Dutch presented to the Ottoman sultan were prized items of the East Indian trade they had recently come to exploit and, indeed, in which they had begun to outstrip their rivals, the Spanish and Portuguese. Porcelain and lacquerware and birds of paradise were highly prized, exotic items newly available on the Amsterdam market. Their availability via the Dutch market was a development the Dutch celebrated publicly – in the form of printed images and local histories and paintings alike.²⁹ In view

²⁶ Heeringa, *Bronnen tot de geschiedenis van den Levantschen handel*, 1, 260–61.

²⁷ Verhaer is a fascinating figure, about which much remains to be said. He is described as “*commis*” in Resolutions of the States General dated 29 October and 17 November 1612; see Heeringa, *Bronnen tot de geschiedenis van den Levantschen handel*, 1, 262.

²⁸ Heeringa, *Bronnen tot de geschiedenis van den Levantschen handel*, 1, 264, citing N.A. Staten Generaal 7075.

²⁹ See, inter alia, Elmer Kolfin, “*Omphalos Mundi*: The Pictorial Tradition of the Theme of Amsterdam and the Four Continents, circa 1600–1665,” in *Aemulatio: Imitation, Emulation and Invention in Netherlandish Art from 1500 to 1800. Essays in Honor of Eric*

of Dutch interest in trade with the Ottoman Empire, the gifts presented to the Ottoman court in 1613 require an analytic framework distinct from established accounts of interpersonal gift exchange. Michael Harbsmeier's account of early modern gift-giving recounts numerous instances from early travelogues of gifts exchanged in advance of trade relations, where donations or gifts were given in order to obtain trust and friendship, but endowed with a force or awe that was geared to dominance or at the very least competition in a trade economy.³⁰ Likewise, the Dutch gift to the sultan seems to have been intended to satisfy local requirements for imperial presentations (it was appreciably vast and contained numerous splendid items). At the same time, it demonstrated Dutch access to valuable merchandise; it represented Dutch trade might.

Baudartius's 1620 account of the Dutch gift contains two essential qualifications for our present purposes. He introduces a list of gifts as those presented on behalf of the States General and by Prince Maurits – the Netherlandish provinces were thus represented to the Ottoman sultan; and his list is immediately followed by the statement: "These presents were very welcome and greatly appreciated and were considered much more valuable than if they had just been so many vessels and beakers of gold and silver. Because silver and gold beakers and cups that the Turks receive, they bring straight to the Mint and make money of them."³¹ Prior accounts of gifts to the Ottomans – Habsburg accounts in particular – bemoaned the incommensurability of the systems of value in play and the Ottoman tendency to melt down gifts of precious metals.³² The Dutch gift extended well beyond currency (one chest was filled with 5000 "*Hollandse daelders*") and vessels (897 pieces of porcelain, in addition to numerous lacquerware vessels and drinking vessels made of shells and horns) to include butter and cheese. It may have fulfilled standard

Jan Sluijter, ed. Anton W. A. Boschloo (Zwolle: Waanders, 2011), 382–92; and Claudia Swan, "Lost in Translation: Exoticism in Early Modern Holland," in *The Fascination of Persia: The Persian-European Dialogue in Seventeenth-Century Art and Contemporary Art of Teheran*, ed. Axel Langer (Zürich: Scheidegger and Spiess, 2013), 100–16.

³⁰ Michael Harbsmeier, "Gifts and Discoveries: Gift Exchange in Early Modern Narratives of Exploration and Discovery," in *Negotiating the Gift: Pre-Modern Figurations of Exchange*, ed. Gadi Algazi, Valentin Groebner and Bernhard Jussen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2003), 381–410. Harbsmeier cites numerous instances from early travelogues of gifts exchanged in advance of trade relations.

³¹ Willem Baudartius, *Memorien, ofte Kort verhael der gedenckuueerdighste geschiedenissen van Nederlandt ende Vranckrijck* (Arnhem: Ian Iansz, 1620), fol. 18v.

³² Notably, Salomon Schweigger, *Ein Neue Reyßbeschreibung auß Teutschland nach Constantinopel und Jerusalem ...* (Nürnberg: Johan Lanßenberger, 1608).

expectations that numerous valuable items be presented; it also contained local products of Dutch industry and agriculture (textiles, furniture, butter, cheese). The Dutch gift represented more than local production: it included such highly sought-after exotica as birds of paradise (eight in all) and a large Chinese chest. The “*rarityeyten van dese landen*” also included hybrid works such as lacquerware vessels made by Willem Kick in Amsterdam in the manner of East Indian lacquerware, presented alongside lacquerware from the East.³³ By and large the Dutch gift was not fungible, although elements of it were edible (cheese, butter, meat) or intended for dispersal and use (fabric) or to be spent (currency). While it represented Dutch trade might, it could not readily be exchanged; the presentation of these goods took them out of market circulation. The *rarityeyten* exemplify this dynamic. Procured by the Dutch in East Asia, they were highly valuable merchandise, the porcelain and other vessels and the birds of paradise, for example. Presented as gifts and enlisted in the show of Dutch trade might, they became priceless.³⁴

While staggering in its proportions and scope, the Dutch gift adheres to the model of the diplomatic gift, intended to negotiate or to broker political relationships – in this case trade relationships controlled by the sultan. The gift is further characterized by two qualities. Firstly, the goods presented by the Dutch were mercantile goods, objects they mobilized on a market they were coming to dominate. (And in this sense, these objects were “*rarityeyten van dese landen*,” locally available foreign goods, or domesticated exotica.) They were market goods off the market, though. The other key quality has to do with display, and what Anthony Cutler calls the “ritual technology of display.” In the case of diplomatic gifts, spectacle was key.³⁵ Contemporary accounts suggest that Haga’s presentation gratified local expectations concerning display. Haga, Baudartius wrote, “honored the Turkish Emperor with some lovely presents all of which were exhibited publicly and for all the world to see, under a

³³ See Reinier Baarsen, “Kistjes van Kick? Hollands lakwerk uit de vroege 17de eeuw,” *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 56 (2008): 12–27.

³⁴ On rarity and gift-giving, see Anne Goldgar, *Tulipmania, Money, Honor and Knowledge in the Dutch Golden Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 56–57; and Florike Egmond, “Precious Nature: Rare Naturalia as Collector’s Items and Gifts in Early Modern Europe,” in *Luxury in the Low Countries: Miscellaneous Reflections on Netherlandish Material Culture 1500 to the Present*, ed. Renggenier Rittersma (Brussels: ASP Editions, 2010), 47–65.

³⁵ Anthony Cutler, “Significant Gifts: Patterns of Exchange in Late Antique, Byzantine, and Early Islamic Diplomacy,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 38 (winter 2008): 79–101, 92–93.

long gallery, and they were all individually carried by attendants, from the smallest to the largest of them, according to the custom of these lands in order to amplify the display ...”³⁶

The matter of value and the crucial role display played for all parties to the Dutch gift are borne out by the birds of paradise – *rarityeyten* that were certainly not fungible. Eight specimens were sold by Amsterdam merchants of Chinese porcelain to the purchasing agent for the States General, and in turn presented to the sultan in Constantinople. Although the birds transported to Constantinople did not fly there, they did ascend in value. The invoice of the Amsterdam merchants who sold birds to the purchasing agent for the States General shows that they cost thirty-one guilders each.³⁷ Baudartius’s account of the gifts describes “three birds of paradise, valued at two thousand *daalders*, which the Sultan regarded with amazement.”³⁸ As we know that three such birds actually cost just under a 100 guilders, the Sultan’s amazement seems to have increased the value exponentially – to thirty-five times the current market value. It is worth noting that the arc of the projection follows the pattern of actual profits rendered, in these very years, in Amsterdam, on such goods as pepper and cloves.³⁹ While Baudartius’s valuation of the birds of paradise might seem on par with calling an extremely valuable item “priceless,” he does in fact name a price, and a very high one at that, for these *rarityeyten*. The form of exchange – the presentation of a diplomatic gift on behalf of the States General to the Ottoman sultan – ostensibly departs from mercantile exchange, but in Baudartius’s description it becomes clear that these highly valued objects derived their value from the market. They could be removed from the market, but the market values could not be removed from them.

GIFTS AND/OR GOODS

Early modern encounters among foreign potentates and their emissaries almost always involved the exchange of valuable goods as gifts. Most

³⁶ Baudartius, *Memorien, ofte korte verhael*, 13r.

³⁷ The receipts are preserved in the “Secrete Kas Turkije,” N.A. 12593.9; see also de Roever, “Een Vorstelijk Geschenck,” and Swan, “Birds of Paradise for the Sultan.”

³⁸ Baudartius, *Memorien, ofte korte verhael*, 13r. This list, of the initial presentation to Sulthan Ahmed I, opens with: “Voor eerst drie Paradys voghels, die-men schatte op twee duysent Daelders, die de Keyser met groote vervvonderinghe aenghesien heeft.”

³⁹ See Douglas A. Irwin, “Mercantilism as Strategic Trade Policy: The Anglo-Dutch Rivalry for the East India Trade,” *Journal of Political Economy* 99, no. 6 (1991): 1296–314.

of these presentations were aligned with trade interests or practices: these gifts were nearly always related to negotiations concerning trade, which in turn were the negotiations by which international relations were forged. The first time birds of paradise were sent to Europe from the East Indies, their point of origin in trade circuits, it was in the form of a gift – to the Holy Roman Emperor and King of Spain Charles V – conveyed to him by the voyagers who had sailed with Magellan. A contemporary account specifies that when in 1522 Spanish ships were loaded at Tidore with cloves for the return to Spain, the Moluccan rulers presented letters and gifts for the emperor. “The gifts were Indian swords, etc. The most remarkable curiosities were some of the birds called *Mamuco Diata*, that is, the Bird of God, with which [the kings] think themselves safe and invincible in battle. Five of these were sent . . .”⁴⁰ The birds were gifts, not commodities; they were in surplus to the merchandise supplied to the Europeans and, as such, integrally associated with while distinct from wares. The status of the bird of paradise as an object of a particular form of exchange (gift exchange), performed in the immediate context of trade, is noteworthy – and consistent with the later instance of the Dutch gift to Sultan Ahmed I. Like many other travel accounts written throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the one cited here narrates the direct connection between gifts and trade along the Eastern routes. The birds of paradise given to Charles V are emblematic of trade and power relations alike. Their presentation, above and beyond the mercantile goods shipped back to Spain, was also made with political intent.

It was part and parcel of standard preparation among early modern European voyagers to assemble goods that could be and were presented as gifts in order to open negotiations and establish alliances that would result in trade; and many travelers’ accounts record gifts presented to bring back to European rulers. The English ambassador Thomas Roe (c. 1581–1644) served at the court of the fourth Mughal emperor Jahan-gir at Agra, India, in 1615–1618 on behalf of the merchants of the East India Company. The published account *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe to the Court of the Great Mogul* contains several references to gifts – which Roe presented in an effort to secure trading rights. Roe represented both the English Crown and the merchants of the East India Company at

⁴⁰ Maximiliano Transylvanus, *De Moluccis insulis, itemque aliis pluribus mirandis quae nouissima Castellatorum nauigatio* (Cologne, 1523), fol. B6v.

the Mughal court. His accounts of gift transactions are as informative as they are poignant: Roe records many a skewed interaction. In a lengthy, occasionally despairing account written to the East India Company in February 1617, Roe explains his efforts on behalf of the merchants in a changing climate: “You can neuer expect,” he writes, “to trade here vpon Capitulations that shalbe permanent. Wee must serue the tyme . . . appetite only gouerns the lordes of the kingdome.” As regards how to procure the goods in which the East India Company wished to trade, Roe writes, “I haue propounded to you a New course, and will here Practise it.”⁴¹ The following paragraph opens with his report that gifts intended for the King [Akbar] had been seized by the Prince Jahangir and given by him to his father. Gifts were integral to trade negotiations, and these negotiations were anything but stable – or permanent.

In what I take to be a crucial passage, tucked in among a series of complaints some pages further along, Roe avers that it is the very trade on behalf of which he was acting that has spoiled the potency of gift-giving practices:

The Presents you sent are in their kynds some good, others ordinarie. Noe man can tell what to aduise for; they change euery yeare their fancy . . . Your shippes haue made all things Common . . . and yearly ther Comes as many toyes of all kyndes as yours, which sould in hast by Marriners or others bound to the Sowthward hath made all Cheape and Common. They imitate euery thing wee bring, and embroder now as well as wee.⁴²

An appendix to this report, “The Aduise from Sir Thomas Roe of Goodes and Presents for Surratt, 1617,” lists a number of trade goods suitable for commercial exchange – textile in various colors, which he specifies; coral, vermilion; various precious and semi-precious stones from pearls and rubies to cat’s eyes and agates; gold lace; and “Quivers for bowes and arrows, Indian fashion.” Roe specifies that these arms, and clothing as well, be provided in the local sort and manner: “And generally I give you this rule: whatsoeuer you send in this kinde must be made by Indian

⁴¹ Thomas Roe, *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe to the Court of the Great Mogul, 1615–1619, as Narrated in His Journal and Correspondence*, ed. William Foster, 2 vols. (London: Hakluyt Society, 1899), vol. 2, 469. See also Ania Loomba, “Of Gifts, Ambassadors, and Copy-Cats: Diplomacy, Exchange, and Difference in Early Modern India,” in *Emissaries in Early Modern Literature and Culture: Mediation, Transmission, Traffic, 1550–1700*, ed. Brinda Charry and Gitanjali Shahani (Surrey and Burlington: Ashgate, 2009), 41–76.

⁴² Roe, *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe*, vol. 2, 478.

patternes, for then they are of vse and euery bodies monie.”⁴³ Nestled in among the gems listed as valued merchandise is a passage in which Roe declares that royal favor can be gained by way of just these goods, and indeed can spare the necessity of presenting gifts:

If you would finde anie rich stone to the value of 20,000*li.* to equall the Portugall, would give you great proffit and Credit . . . By this meanes only you can compas a stocke and make your trade desired; vpon such a rare peece you maie get anie Conditions, for their Coveteousnes of them is vnsatiable. If you can send yerely in great stones of theis kindes or pearles 100 v 000*li.* . . . it would vent [sell] to proffitt and make you highly requested. Without this the Kinge wilbe wearie; and it will save you presents.

Roe declares that the finest of wares will trump all other manner of negotiations. “All other things will faile you and with theis you may putt of anie thing.” He even hazards the opinion that the English Crown might offload some of its less essential baubles in the interest of securing such favor. “The Towre, I ame perswaded, could furnish you with many great olde stones that are vseles.”⁴⁴

The subsequent section of Roe’s 1617 report lists gifts suitable for presentation to the Mughal emperor on behalf of the English king, which are almost entirely consistent with the trade goods just enumerated.⁴⁵ Roe specifies that gifts such as he lists should be presented once in three years, and then only four or five of what he lists, “with one of good value.”

“Fitt presentes from the King. Some good stone for once, or some rich peece of Arras, silke and gould, but one or two at most. A rich peece of Tissue or Cloathe of gould. A fine Crowne, sett with small stones. A faire bed feild, with lace or some worke. A rich feild Caparason and Sadle, the patterne from hence. A Coate of Sattin imbrodered, the paterne from hence. With theis: Some Cushions, Cabben-netts, glasses, Standishes and toyes of vse for others. Pictuers of all sortes, if good, in constant request; Some large storie; Diana this yere gave great content.”⁴⁶

Much more might be said of his recommendations, and of the pictures he did present in the event, and of the sorts of misunderstandings his negotiations appear to have elicited. For the present purposes, however, it will have to suffice to point to the relative interchangeability, as per Roe’s recommendations and in the case of the Dutch gift to the Ottoman court alike, of gifts and goods – in substance and in presentation.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 486–87.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 487.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 488.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 488.

PRESENTS AND POLITICAL RECOGNITION

Early seventeenth-century Dutch images of trade and trade goods convey a similar fusion of the processes and products of gift-giving and of trade. This is aptly illustrated by a 1611 wall print by Claes Janszn Visscher after Pieter Bast that combines a profile view of Amsterdam and its harbor with a lengthy explanatory text and individual woodcut vignettes of specific landmarks (Figure 6.2).⁴⁷

The extensive, anonymous text is a paean to a city still in formation. Amsterdam is already characterized as a global trade hub: “*De wijtvermaerde Hooft-Coop-stadt des gantschen Weereelts Amsterdam*,” or “the world famous trade capital of the world.” People from all parts of the world feel compelled, the text declares, to “send or present in person their priceless wares to Amsterdam, as if to a world-renowned empress.” The presentation of gifts to the maid of Amsterdam pictured above the text that embodies these transactions represents a powerful rewriting of actual trade dynamics. The crowned, personification of the global entrepôt sits atop a throne of poles, the piles on which the city is built in the morass it occupies. She holds a ship in her right hand and the crest of the city in the other, as she receives delegations of what the text describes as “all the principle peoples of the world.” The text revels in itemizing the fruits of current trade. The litany of goods from the East Indies is extensive: “the abundance of silk, precious gems, pepper, ginger, cinnamon, cassia, nutmeg, and other spices along with countless herbs and roots that is shipped from Java to Amsterdam is so great that one can hardly articulate it or describe it credibly.” This verbal cornucopia extends to imports from Africa and Brazil as well Madeira and elsewhere in Spain and the Mediterranean and Turkey: “silk, damask, velvets, Caffa and other such artfully woven cloths . . . fine bombazine, glass drinking cups, Venetian mirrors, bezoars etc. come here from Turkey, Italy, and other southern lands.” In addition, the “Tartar and the Persian with a laden camel bring gemstones, Oriental pearls, the medicinal bezoar stone, many silks, balsam oil, and incense.” The list also includes tin and lead and other goods from England, Prussian items, milk and cheese and eggs from more local regions; it is as replete with data as the image it qualifies, where a wide variety of local representatives embody the trade described. Amsterdam is a city made of goods, many of them exotic. Crucially, in neither the

⁴⁷ Boudewijn Bakker et al., *Het Aanzien van Amsterdam: Panorama's, Plattegronden en Profielen uit de Gouden Eeuw* (Bussum, 2007), plate 1.

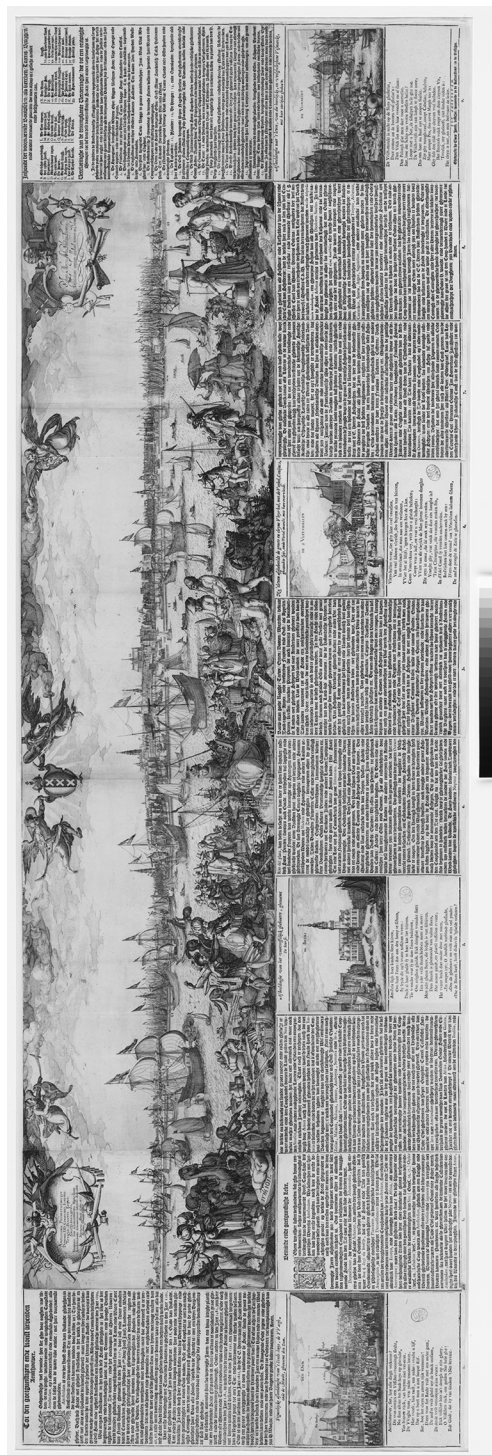


FIGURE 6.2 Claes Janszn Visscher, *Profile of Amsterdam from the IJ*, etching and engraving, with text, 1611, 44.1 cm \times 147.4 cm. Amsterdam: Rijksprentenkabinet, Rijksmuseum.

text nor the image do intermediaries or agents mediate the transfer of goods: trade is represented as a direct function of the desire of the various peoples and nations depicted to present their goods and wares: the maid of Amsterdam sits among the various goods like an idol among remains of devotional rites. The text concludes, “In sum, everything that is necessary for the maintenance of the body and for the amusement of the spirit is here so abundant that you could say that God’s merciful blessing, the very cornucopia or horn of plenty, is being poured down on us.”⁴⁸ Here, trade goods are converted, rhetorically, into gifts or homage – and even into providential blessing.

By the time that the extraordinary iconographical program of the Oranjezaal at Huis ten Bosch, the residence of Amalia van Solms and Stadholder Frederick Hendrik in The Hague, was completed, the association of Dutch power with exotic goods was all but a commonplace. Jacob van Campen’s 1648 *Triumphal Procession with Gifts from East and West* (Figure 6.3) forms part of the substantial, stunning pictorial cycle in the Oranjezaal commissioned by Amalia von Solms to commemorate her husband in the late 1640s.⁴⁹

The larger-than-life composition features a wide range of artful, colorful, rare and valuable goods in combination with allegorical figures whose role seems merely to present or offer the luxuries: they are figures of abundance, of the copia of exotica. These are not the intermediaries via whom such goods made their way into the collection of the Stadholders – which, by the time this was painted, contained a vast array of comparable exotic goods.⁵⁰ Their collection, usually cited as a Northern Netherlandish outpost of Flemish baroque taste in painting, contained myriad exotica, described as “Indisch” and “Oostindisch” objects – from crystal, agate, serpentine, amber and coral to porcelain and lacquerwork, and from objects decorated

⁴⁸ The text is lengthy and anonymous and all citations are from it; translations are my own. See Boudewijn Bakker, ed., *Het Aanzien van Amsterdam. Panorama’s, Plattegronden en Profielen uit de Gouden Eeuw* (Amsterdam: Thoth, 2007), 259–60.

⁴⁹ Margriet Eikema Hommes and Elmer Kolfin, *De Oranjezaal in Huis ten Bosch. Een zaal uit louter liefde* (Zwolle: Waanders, 2013).

⁵⁰ S. W. A. Drossaers and Th. H. Lunsingh Scheurleer, eds., *Inventarissen van de inboedels in de verblijven van de Oranjes en daarmee gelijk te stellen stukken 1567–1795*, 3 vols. (‘s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974–76), vol. 1, 239–96 (*Inventaris van kostbaarheden, meubelen, schilderijen van Amalia van Solms 1654–1668*). See also Peter van der Ploeg and Carola Vermeeren, *Vorstelijk Verzameld. De Kunstcollectie van Frederik Hendrik en Amalia* (Zwolle: Waanders, 1997), esp. C. Willemijn Fock, “Frederik Hendrik en Amalia’s appartementen: Vorstelijk vertoon naast de triomf van het porselein,” 76–86.

or made with tortoise-shell to coconuts, ivory and mother of pearl. Like the Bast-Visscher print, the larger-than-life painting of exotic goods by van Campen also features the colonialist trope of gifting as a means of institutionalizing the dominance of the recipient and naturalizing the processes by which such goods and stuffs were procured and transported and bought and sold. In the van Campen Oranjezaal painting, porcelain and feather parasols and parrots and Japanese armor are of a piece in a collage of exotica. Both of these images render exotic goods with a high degree of specificity (the parrot, the featherwork of the New World, the weave of the Japanese armor, the glaze and figuration of the porcelain vessel are highly individuated – and indeed, the fact that a set of human eyes peers out of the armor’s mask at the apex of the composition conveys the unmistakable impression that each object is a stand-in for a people, a land even) at the same time that they, the print and the painting alike, render these goods as all equally subject to the forces and conditions of trade.

The visual rhetoric of the Bast-Visscher profile view of Amsterdam and the Oranjezaal composition of goods from the East and West Indies help to illustrate that gifts and trade goods were interchangeable in early modern Dutch negotiations – negotiations based on expectations that, as Roe’s account of his embassy to India attests, pertained more broadly, outside the scope of Dutch encounters. Many of the precious or valuable goods depicted in either the wall print or the painting circulated by way of trade, and several were certainly presented as gifts. The collection of Amalia van Solms and Frederick Hendrik was densely populated with diplomatic or state gifts. A contemporary witness testified to the provenance of the very valuable goods belonging to Amalia as follows: “Nearly all foreign kings, princes, and potentates, the Indian companies, cities and wealthy societies of Holland sent her presents, which she received openly and graciously without subjugation or secretly.”⁵¹ Such gifts were tokens of recognition, much as the baubles Roe suggested be presented to

⁵¹ “Presque tous les rois, les princes et les potentats étrangers, les compagnies des Indes, les villes et les riches sociétés de Hollande lui envoyaient des présents qu’elle recevait ouvertement et de bonne grâce sans bassesse ni en cachette.” The quotation continues: “Ainsi elle possédait en peu de temps une prodigieuse quantité de vaisselle d’or massif pour tous les usages de la vie, des meubles pompeux de toutes sortes, des cabinets lambrissés de laque de la Chine, des vases de porcelaine d’une grandeur d’une forme et d’une abondance extra ordinaire, des coffres et des vases d’ambre, d’agate, de cristal de roche garnis de pierres précieuses sans nombre où les perles et diamants n’étaient point oubliés.” Les mémoires du borgrave et comte Frederic de Dohna 1621–1688, ed. H. Borkowski (Königsberg, 1898), 27. Quoted in Drossaers and Lunsingh Scheurleer, *Inventarissen*, vol. 1, GS 147, 239.

the Mughal emperor. The suit of Japanese armor, for example, that occupies the upper portion of the canvas was likely a gift from the emperor to the Stadholder Maurits, given around the same time that James I of England received his own, in 1613.⁵² Numerous other instances of gifts to the Dutch state come to mind here as well: when envoys of the sultan of Aceh arrived in the Netherlands in 1602, they came bearing gifts for their nominal host, Prince Maurits, Stadholder of the United Provinces, that included several spears and other armor as well as a talking parrot that spoke Malay.⁵³ The cassowary bird in Maurits's collection, of which two engravings survive, was one among many exotic creatures and items presented to the Dutch state in the early years of its development.⁵⁴ Other gifts include those brought by the Moroccan embassy to the Hague in 1605, sent by the Shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu to Maurits in 1609, and exchanged with the Siamese king in 1608 and 1609, as well as the presentations to the Ottoman Sultan made by the Dutch to the court in Constantinople. Diplomatic efforts were mobilized to secure recognition for the emergent statehood of the United Provinces outside the Netherlands – and simultaneously, the States General and its representatives received goods and presents that accorded them political recognition.⁵⁵

MOBILIZING ALLIANCES

A signal instance of the Dutch mobilization of curious goods for political purposes is a state gift presented to King James I's son Henry Stuart,

⁵² Glenn Adamson and Giorgio Riello, "Global Objects: Contention and Entanglement," in *Writing the History of the Global: Challenges for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Maxine Berg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), who discuss the gift of suits of armor from the shogun; Mia Mochizuki discusses several instances of gifts in "Idolatry and Western-inspired Painting in Japan," in *Idols in the Age of Art: Objects, Devotions and the Early Modern World*, ed. Michael W. Cole and Rebecca Zorach (Surrey and Burlington: Ashgate, 2009), 239–66.

⁵³ In 1601, Sultan Alau'd-din Ri'ayat Shah of Aceh sent emissaries and gifts to Maurits; the gifts included "a small jewel and a ring with four big stones and some smaller stones, a dagger with a gold and copper sheath wrapped in a silver cloth, a golden cup and saucer and a gold-plated silver pot and two Malay speaking parrots with silver chains." Ingrid Saroda Mitrasing, "The Age of Aceh and the Evolution of Kingship 1599–1641," PhD diss., Leiden University, 2011, 88.

⁵⁴ Zandvliet, *Maurits, Prins van Oranje*, 318–19.

⁵⁵ Cardinal-Duke of Richelieu is reported to have given earrings to Amalia van Solms on behalf of the King of France, Louis XIII, "so that she would close her ears to their enemies' whispers." See also A. Arthur Kleinschmidt, *Amalia von Oranien, geborene Gräfin zu Solms-Braunfels. Ein Lebensbild* (Berlin: Rade, 1905), 26.

Prince of Wales in 1610. This presentation, orchestrated by the Dutch ambassador in London, Noel Caron, and assembled over the course of several months in early 1610, was motivated by a desire on the part of the States General to ingratiate itself with the presumed heir to the English throne. The Dutch were grateful for English support in the formulation of the Twelve Years' Truce (1609–21) with Spain and hopeful of future support. In the state documents relating to this gift, purchases are described as motivated by the ability “to thereby honor the Prince of Wales, whose succession is secure and whose friendship is necessary to these lands.” Prince Henry is described as being “certain to succeed [his father as king],” and his friendship with the United Provinces is necessary. To Henry and his court the Dutch state presented a very fine array of objects, which included a series of tapestries, woven by François Spiering of Delft; two large West Indian bezoar stones and two East Indian bezoar stones; a painting by Hendrik Cornelisz Vroom of the Battle of Gibraltar and another painting of a storm at sea. The Dutch also gave four tapestries woven with gold that were presented, as we have seen, in The Hague in 1605 by Hammu ben Bashir, the ambassador of the King Mulay Zidan of Morocco, and an ivory fan “very subtly and artfully wrought” that had also been a gift, from the King of Siam to Captain Joris Spilbergen.⁵⁶ The 1610 Dutch gift occupies the margins of current historical and art historical work, but is another crucial record in the history of early modern global exchange – and of exchange in which cultural artifacts, *rarityten* among them, played a crucial role.⁵⁷

A final instance of the role cultural artifacts played in the transcultural exchanges staged by the Dutch in the early seventeenth century is from the accounts of Jacob van Heemskerck (1567–1607), one of the early Dutch

⁵⁶ J. J. Dodt van Flensburg, “Resolütiën der Generale Staten uit de XVII eeuw. Meer onmiddellijk betreffende de geschiedenis der beschaving,” in *Archief voor kerkelijke en wereldsche geschiedenissen, inzonderheid van Utrecht*, 7 vols. (Utrecht: Bosch, 1838–48), vol. 5 (1846), 19.

⁵⁷ On the Dutch gift, see J. G. van Gelder, “Notes on the Royal Collection – IV: The ‘Dutch Gift’ of 1610 to Henry, Prince of ‘Whalis,’ and Some Other Presents,” *The Burlington Magazine* 105 (1963): 541–45, and Inge Broekman and Helmer Helmers, “Het Hart des Offraers: The Dutch Gift as an Act of Self-Representation,” *Dutch Crossing* 31 (2007): 223–52. On Henry and his collection, see Roy Strong, *Henry Prince of Wales* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986), 188; for an account of his collecting interests in the context of London collecting practices, see Stephen Orgel, “Idols of the Gallery: Becoming a Connoisseur in Renaissance England,” in *Early Modern Visual Culture: Representation, Race, and Empire in Renaissance England*, ed. Peter Erickson and Clark Hulse (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 251–78, esp. 253–55. Neither of these accounts emphasizes the exotic objects in his possession.

Republic's great seafaring heroes. Van Heemskerck was involved in the earliest voyages to the East Indies, survived a winter on Nova Zembla and led the Dutch against the Spanish in the Siege of Gibraltar. As vice-admiral of the second Dutch East Indies Expedition, undertaken prior to the foundation of the VOC and a major source of inspiration for its founding, van Heemskerck maintained a journal, a "*Memorye*," from 1598 until 1600, the year in which the fleet returned to Amsterdam. In an entry on conducting trade along the Javanese coast and in the Moluccan Islands, van Heemskerck makes several useful recommendations, among them where to buy the best wines (Bantam) and meats (Bali) for provisioning. More immediately pertinent, if slightly delirious, are his directives for the conduct of trade in Asian goods:

In order to trade most favorably in Banda and Ternate it is necessary to purchase in Bantam various sorts of porcelain, cottons, Bengalese and other linens, which are brought there by the Chinese, the Portuguese, and the Gujarati along with many other diverse sorts of wares which may be acquired there; so that when one travels from there to Jurtan and buys Madura and other sorts of cloths which the Portuguese bring there, and from there to Bali to buy Balinese cloths and rice on Timor and in other places ...⁵⁸

Such valuable goods as the Dutch brought back to the Netherlands – pepper and spices, porcelain, textiles – were extracted from a longstanding, dense network of trade relations. The back and forth of valuable goods is punctuated in van Heemskerck's account by reference to gifts, which greased the wheels of this market machinery. Gifts presented to the King of Bantam included, for example, "a gilt drinking vessel, certain velvet and silk textiles, some beautiful glasses, and gilt mirrors." From discussion of gifts exchanged between Prince Maurits and the King of Toeban it appears that the latter presented Maurits with a gilded kris and two beautiful ("*fraaye*") spears. Van Heemskerck recommends further transmission of letters and such objects ("*eenighe frayheyt*") to secure the relationship that he characterizes as one of trust and goodwill. The king is a lover of dogs, and shows the vice-admiral fifteen of them in his personal quarters, which van Heemskerck however deemed "ugly," writing that the Dutch will also therefore send a "beautiful and well-trained water

⁵⁸ Jacob van Heemskerck, "*Memorie, door Jacob van Heemskerck opgesteld over de wijze waarop, naar zijne bevinding op de kustplaatsen van Java en in de Molukken, den handel moet gedreven worden*," in *De Opkomst van het Nederlandsch Gezag in Oost-Indie (1595–1610)*, ed. J. K. J. de Jonge, 18 vols. ('s-Gravenhage: M. Nijhoff, 1864), vol. 2 (1864), 448–54.

dog.”⁵⁹ Van Heemskerck adds that “if there is any cloth of a beautifully colored flower velvet and some other beautiful wares, that would bring about improvement.” Van Heemskerck is referring to trade relations. He specifies that the Dutch do not trade with the Toebanese, but that things might in the future change. Later, he recommends that gifts be presented at Jurtan, also to the governor, and that Jurtan is “the finest port in all of Java where the bulk of trade in spices such as nutmeg, mace, and cloves takes place.” Like the goods presented to Ottoman Sultan Ahmed I and exchanged in these decades among potentates around the globe, state or diplomatic gifts played a critical role in enabling commerce: wondrous wares guaranteed the circulation of valuable goods; and awe-inspiring gifts ensured the ebb and flow of valuable trade.

CONCLUSION: THE ECONOMY OF THE EARLY MODERN GIFT

This chapter analyzes a number of gifts made on behalf of the States General of the United Provinces of the Netherlands and Prince Maurits, Stadholder, in the early decades of the seventeenth century, the formative years of the Dutch Republic, which would gain full recognition in 1648. One of the primary claims I make is that the Dutch saw and represented themselves as merchants in exotic, foreign, curious and rare goods par excellence. Likewise, gifts presented on behalf of the United Provinces featured these sorts of objects, also frequently referred to as *rariteyten*, or rarities. In examining the role of exotic merchandise in Dutch negotiations with foreign powers during the first decades of the seventeenth century, I have considered the relationship between the objects presented as gifts and the value of those same objects as merchandise in an emergent market. Negotiations between the States General of the Netherlands and/or Dutch merchants and foreign rulers are here represented by case studies, the first of which concerns gifts presented by the States General in the course of securing trade agreements with the Ottoman sultan. Dutch presents were made in the spirit of affirming diplomatic and political relations – and specifically, in the case of the Netherlands, relations bearing on trade.

In an essay on late antique, Byzantine and early Islamic diplomacy and exchange, Anthony Cutler has observed that diplomatic gifts have been “consigned by historians to that special *oubliette* where they keep the

⁵⁹ Van Heemskerck, “*Memorie*,” 450.

evidence they consider unhelpful to the understanding of political and economic events.” Cutler calls attention to what we might think of as the specific gravity of diplomatic gifts. Recent studies in diplomatic history and on the agents of diplomatic negotiations offer new ways of thinking about the exchange of information and goods and, for example, *negozio* as the dynamic of early modern diplomacy and trade alike.⁶⁰ Marika Keblusek, for example, has proposed a deeply compelling model for the study of early modern agents who negotiated policy, goods and knowledge alike. Pointing out that “the commercial aspects of brokerage – the *trade* in art and news and services – have mostly been overlooked in scholarship on agents and agency,” Keblusek asserts that “agent” be understood as a function rather than a profession.⁶¹ She has demonstrated the great potential and historical pertinence of considering cultural and political brokerage or negotiations as integrally linked: agents obtained access via either political or cultural endeavors, or both, and used each in close association with the other. By extension, as this chapter proposes, diplomatic gifts can fruitfully be understood as agents of political and cultural negotiations alike. In some instances, these aims were inseparable.⁶² Overall, what seems of signal importance is to acknowledge the intersection of political and mercantile interests in the economy of the early modern diplomatic gift. Gifts presented in the early decades of the seventeenth century by the Dutch – whether by or on behalf of the VOC, the States General or the stadholder himself – were more often than not exemplary mercantile goods, many of them *rariteyten*. These curious, exotic, luxury goods represented Dutch trade might and, in turn, their political reach. As the foregoing episodes in the history of material culture of the Dutch Republic demonstrate, mobilizing *rariteyten* was a crucial means by which the Dutch sought to identify themselves politically and commercially on the global stage.

⁶⁰ See, for example, Marika Keblusek and Badeloch Noldus, eds., *Double Agents: Cultural and Political Brokerage in Early Modern Europe* (Brill: Leiden, 2011).

⁶¹ Marika Keblusek, “Introduction: Double Agents in Early Modern Europe,” in Keblusek and Noldus, *Double Agents*, 1–9, 4.

⁶² A fascinating instance that lies beyond the scope of this chapter is the so-called “coronation casket” sent from Ceylon to Catherine of Portugal in 1541–42; see Annemarie Jordan Gschwend and Johannes Beltz, *Elfenbeine aus Ceylon. Luxusgüter für Katharina von Habsburg (1507–1578)* (Zürich: Museum Rietberg, 2010), 35–40 and Biedermann in this volume. See also Marika Keblusek, “The Embassy of Art: Diplomats as Cultural Brokers,” in Keblusek and Noldus, *Double Agents*, 11–25.